

The Ultimate Law of Social Evolution

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THE ULTIMATE LAW OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION.

In determining the underlying forces of the social organism, theorists and scientists have become involved in queries exceedingly problematical. One relies upon a certain condition of facts and circumstances to fix and establish what he deems the only possible mode of progress of any society or even of any social group. Another regards social development similiar in all respects to that of an organism, hence the laws of the growth, development and activities of each individual member of society are applicable with equal force to society as a whole. Others more resourceful in biological history and research maintain that social development has passed through a series of changes, not dissimilar in any respect from the developmental changes of any other group of organic beings and, therefore, conforms to the processes of selection there involved in all particulars whatsoever.

However divergent from the true status these theories may be, we observe a fundamental law working out through a process synthetical in its nature but incontrovertible and positive in its characteristics.

In the earliest stages of primitive society, man in search of maintenance and the necessaries of life was the adversary of every other living being. Self-preservation is the first law which he could recognize. Even so may this be illustrated under present conditions of civilization in times of imminent danger - in railroad disasters or in shipwreck, man's almost superhuman effort is expended in preserving himself

from the awful fate which he knows is to overcome his fellows. Occasionally and truly so, this effort of self-preservation is put forth in aid of others, whom, by reason of consanguinity, affinity or some allied relationship or in the spirit of heroism, he seeks to preserve from the inevitable death to which they are doomed. But this, in cases other than above instanced, is certainly an exception rather than a rule. Such acts in the course of social development follow more as a matter of psychical development than as an innate or intuitive act on the part of the individual. When the needs of self-preservation are satisfied, man, then, casts about for other means by which to guard himself against improvidence and absolute want. By contact with his fellows a consciousness is developed in which the one being recognises the other as of like kind with himself. He finds other creatures all about him like unto himself, having a similar existence and, from force of circumstances, desires similar of satisfaction; enduring the same hardships; protecting themselves against the same conditions of the elements; cognizant of the same pains and the same pleasures.

Association is brought about as a matter of course and with it comes co-operation. By co-operation his former status is modified and improved. The intervals of famine are less frequent and of short duration. His habitation is less temporary and more stable, furnishing better protection against the changes of season and the rigors of climate. His ability to cope with forces which tend to his destruction are greatly enhanced and, by a union with similar groupings, additional advantages over unto-

ward surroundings are observed and aggregation follows in consequence. They are now in a state of natural society which is aptly described in the following language: "When a number of persons are supposed to be in the habit of conversing with each other at the same time; when they do not pay obedience to a certain person or a definite number of persons, they are said to be in a state of natural society."

With association and aggregation come the other requisites necessary to a well-organized society. From contact and propinquity certain relations are brought into existence which are ^{to} be governed by certain fixed and definite principles which must be ordained as fundamental law. With this state of relationships and all further essentials in the institution and enforcement of a government follows the state of political society. Political society exists "When a number of persons are supposed to be in the habit of paying obedience to a person or an assemblage of persons of a no certain description, such persons altogether are said to be in a state of political society." Out of natural society in the course of progress springs political society with all the concomittant circumstances. This progress beginning with the lowest primitive types contrasts most markedly with the present psychical and political conditions of society. Looking back we see that the road by which man has come is strewn with wrecks of nations, races and civilizations that have fallen by the way, pushed aside by the opreation of laws which it takes no eye of faith to distinguish still at work amongst us as surely and effectively as at any past period.

These variations from the primitive to the highest and most perfected state of social achievement are but well defined gradations in the stages of an inevitable progress. "Progress, says Mr. Flower, has been due to the opportunity of those individuals who are a little superior in some respects to their fellows, of asserting their superiority and of continuing to live and of promulgating as an inheritance that superiority." It follows then, a priori, that each stage in human progress is the outcome and result of the stage which has immediately preceded it. It is a series of changes beginning with savage life and ending with the most advanced existing civilization representing a chain whose links are closely bound together, and mark each additional epoch of progress.

Social progress is in fact a natural evolution, in which human beings are moulded into fitness for the social state and society adjusted into fitness for the natures of men. It is these changes of structure which have brought about the consequences of the static condition of the savage life and his likeness of occupation. The savage hunted the game which furnished forth his family table; occasionally battled with his adversaries; built his own hut; furnished, from the skins of animals which he consumed as food, the garments which protected him from the severities of climate; and domineered and ruled over his household compelling his wife to endure a life of drudgery. When the wig-wam was removed from a location where there was dearth of food-supply, she carried the household goods and bore the burdens of transmigration to a more favorable situation

and performed all the labors of agriculture besides spending much of her time fishing and ^{at} such other labors as would supply the family wants. Division of labor was observed only between the sexes. No other influence seems to bear upon the distinction between the labor to be performed by either and they allowed no other to intervene.

All the changes which have taken place socially among primitive peoples have tended to produce coherence among its members, to which has been largely due our present standard of the division of labor. And so whole nations have been made coherent by the dependence of its parts which, though distinct, have become so closely connected that they cannot live without mutual aid. It is impossible for a manufacturing community to be without clothing which a manufacturing community furnishes. The coal miner furnishes the fuel for all those who use fire and are as much dependent upon him for it as the manufacturers who use engines and furnaces. The tasks of the mason and builder must be left undone unless the quarrymen and carpenter have actively pursued their special vocations. Without the vigilance and activity of the civil engineer transcontinental and international commerce would have been as yet impossible. The mechanic adds his quota to the advancement made in the rapidity of transportation by the constant exercise of his supreme and exacting skill. The origin and manipulations of these great department stores with their attendant consequences and the multitudinous and multifarious wholesale houses together with commission merchants aggregating in almost every City are

creatures of social necessity. Our National Banking system associated with banking systems operating under laws of every State and co-operating with similar institutions of every land throughout the world are prime factors in the intellectual upbuilding of a thorough and enlightened public finance. Persevering, intelligent and invaluable research of only recent years comparatively speaking in art, science, medicine and law have yielded tomes and epitomes of learning hitherto unsought for and unknown. Labor unions manifest the desire for the exclusiveness of those of that particular class from laborers of another. The shop-keeper, inn-keeper, journey-men, mistress and maid are examples of the interdependence of members of organized society. The savage wars carried on by a mere handful of warriors on the one hand pitted against a small band on the other have given way to standing armies and formidable ships of war. The governmental changes from one man who played various parts such as the legislative, executive, judicial, military and ecclesiastic to those of great Democracies wherein the powers and functions of almost innumerable officials are specifically prescribed. Governmental evolution is the result of social necessities. These many changes disclose the advancement of the social organization in coherence and from a state of heterogeneity to that of definiteness. Evolution, then, is in part a change from a state of indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to that of definite heterogeneity. From the influences which governed in the development of species in biological life come influences acting and reacting upon the surroundings and envi-

ronment of the savage until there is moulded the embryonal structure of social development. By maintaining favorable conditions there cannot be more good done than that of letting social progress go on unhindered.

Man's consciousness of what was about him was at first certainly ill-defined but, though pursuing his aim in untried ways and in fields yet unexplored, so to speak, the time was soon at hand when, in the progress of his social station, mankind became conscious of his corporate existence and the improvement of his condition became an object of conscious effort. Respecting the essential causes of this social transformation it must suffice to say that it results from certain general traits in human beings joined with their knowledge of their varying circumstances.

Civilized man is not like a species undergoing a process of improvement unconscious of influences determining its career but he is aware of changes that are taking place about him in his social conditions and consciously and deliberately takes measures for their improvement. So he does not expend vital energy in the arduous task of discovering the laws of social evolution for the sake of merely establishing means for elucidating phenomena but for the purpose of exhibiting the real character of the process whereby we have attained our present civilization. No such activity is observed in any other animal organism. From birth to maturity and from maturity to the decline and the decay of the animal world no forces add strength to the natural resources for the preservation of any animal group save that of man. He alone must be the mindful, deliberate and unrestrained director of all the universe. In him is the origin,

source and consummation of all that goes to increase his means of acquiring happiness or directing natural forces into channels which ^{bear} his imperishable mark. To such, in short, is due the facts and factors of artificial selection. Thought and action, therefore, are prerequisites in the course of evolution itself and are necessary for advancing it. Thought and action are increments of the aggregate force which produces change. Thought and action are the media by which the adjustment of the inner to the outer relations in time and space is brought about.

Mr. Kidd in his exposition of "Social Evolution" says: "Man has no innate tendency to make any onward progress whatever. . . . If he follows his own inclination the average of one generation has no tendency to rise above the average of a preceding one. Progress is the result of a selection and rejection over which he has no control." Upon that proposition able thinkers and writers are far from a harmonious position but in view of the further factors that are constantly at work in human society and by the great weight of authority, the real and conclusive impulses and motives in operation would emphatically disprove and reverse such an attitude. Man is ever striving to gain supremacy over his fellows. This is the result of premeditation. His circumstances compel him to cope with conditions as they exist. He is not a mere creature of fate although he is intertwined with social activities in such a manner that he is powerless to escape. If he fails to keep pace with the standard fixed by the conscious planning of those about him, he is shifted aside, is relegated to an inferior grade and finally perishes simply because he is no longer

fit for survival. Energetic labor and insatiable desire have ever been a pronounced characteristic of the people. By adapting their wants, needs and conditions to those of their environment they are fitted to survive. They acquire success by avoiding failure. Mr. Giddings in his "Principles of Sociology" says: "All human groupings therefore have to adapt themselves finally to physical conditions but also to the social mind. They are still natural products of individual habit but they are finally modified by the social-self, which chooses and sanctions.

Development of association into intimacy and, above all the development of festivity, conferred the elementary language of animals into speech which was thence forward the foundation of human progress. Social evolution is but a phase of cosmic evolution. All social energy is transmuted physical energy. The energy of a population is never more than momentarily equal to the active and latent energies about which there is a continual interchange of matter and energy between a population and its environment."

Social unities are held together by food supply, and the groupings of the social composition are naturally products of the physiological and psychological activities of the individual supplemented by natural selection and, not only is natural selection found performing its function among human beings but it is that force which is at work among the various species of animals of the universe. It is that force in nature which acts through intuition and brings about regenerative changes which have an unflinching tendency to preserve and protect the species from retrogres-

sion and decay without the design or consideration of any additional or external power. It continues its operation with man in the numerous occupations by way of certain original differences between individuals partly physical and partly psychical. These individual differences and peculiarities are natural aptitudes by which specialization of function is accounted for. Hence inequalities of nature together with inequalities of relative position are elements entering into social evolution, both being accounted for to a greater or less extent by natural selection.

We have then to recognize four supreme and ever-present factors by which we attempt to account for the forces of society working out through a process of evolution.

First, we have a natural selection which shapes and molds the destinies of man prior to his state of conscious existence and which continues in operation among men through fortuitous variation. Second, we have natural processes modified and changed by man's conscious and deliberate effort. New structures are built from old material. New articles servicable in all the phases of human life are brought into existence by the aid of invention and unshapely objects are changed into articles of beauty and magnificence. Third, we have that of adaptation in its narrower sense whereby man exercises the knowledge of his existence by way of shaping and adjusting his circumstances to conform to social necessities and to prepare himself to meet the demands made upon him by society. Fourth, we have the selective process which determines social efficiency - the rein and check to all the innumerable forces which are at work in the

social mind. If one man's efforts can no longer equal those of others about him, his superiors have unbounded sway over all and he must submit or seek another vocation in which he may compete successfully. If a demand for labor upon any particular individual or class of individuals in a certain locality ceases, they are no longer needed there and must seek elsewhere for employment or if it be articles of dress, diet, etc., they must furnish another which is in demand or expect to carry on a successful concern by depending upon a demand from other localities where their articles will be purchased. If they furnish a new article, it is incumbent upon them to furnish or produce that article at a reasonable cost. Social efficiency is, therefore, the sequence of the force at work in society embodied in the term, survival of the fittest.

To determine the fundamental law of life and society is the highest aim of all sociologists. Upon the one hand it is claimed that the cause of modification is the influence of surroundings joined with and made a part of modification which is transmitted by heredity. This fails to account in full for social evolution for the reason that it overlooks an important element and one that has produced its greatest results in the pristine state of human as well as animal existence and which has evolved man, on a par with the brute creation, from a state of unconsciousness to that of knowledge of his own existence. That element has been happily called natural selection.

Again we are to understand that the only true process of evolution has been and is due to natural selection and to that alone. From

this point of view the degenerating process so important in social evolution is surely overlooked. In the struggle for life the vanquished are not exterminated but are spared by the victors who try to make use of them and to live at their expense. It is evident that an artificial selection has been at work.

Upon the other hand we have that of adaptation in its broadest sense by which we can discern the dominant force in all social evolution. That there is a tendency of all human nature ever to produce a more complete and self-suffering individuality and end in the highest type of man as the most complete individual, there can be no doubt. But how is this to be brought about? What has been the one great factor coupled with others which it may rightly include that has been present in every stage of human progress that is to establish a uniform and prevailing law by which to account for all the varied phases of social phenomena? To enumerate examples sufficient to illustrate every phase in detail would involve one in an arduous and unavailing task besides imposing a burden upon the reader which few would voluntarily wish to assume. In conclusion we will therefore deal in general terms.

Man from the beginning was of different stocks. History and observation show us men in groups. By a natural process they develop an eternal sympathy between like stocks and an eternal hatred for the unlike. In the first instance we are confronted with a lack of harmony in a group of men with others of similar groups. These groups vary, multiply, struggle with each other, coalesce and melt away. There is a social disorder

and turbulence which finally ends in war. The struggle between men depends upon and is incited by insufficiency of means to support life and other social circumstances. These forces in each aggregate gradually tend toward a state of quiescence, the units of the aggregate perpetually acting and reacting until equilibrium is reached. Constant adaptation and readaptation to continually changing conditions is the only process that will entail this consequence. By such means the vital activities of the social human being are persistently being molded into definite form so that they may be realized to the uttermost advantage without mutual hindrance. When the struggle has lessened, there arises parasitic relations between the victor and the vanquished which are governed by customs peremptorily established. With time these relations cease. With the accumulation of experience and goods their condition is improved. In this amelioration advancement is made by tortuous ways, now receding, now standing still, now advancing by leaps and bounds into a new environment to which all must gradually conform or perish. There is then a direct adaptation of the feelings and sentiments of men to their circumstances by inherited modifications and modifications produced by habit and there is also to be recognised the process of the dying out of the unfit and the survival of the fittest.

In the transformation there is but one alternative by which man may survive and that is to maintain an adaptation of their faculties and sentiments to their surroundings. Then by increasing in mass and showing a higher integration not only because of adaptation but also in growing

solidarity, they prepare themselves for a new transformation. Constant reiterations of an antecedent integration followed by a differentiation with marked regularity and periodicity expose the skeleton of the social process which is constantly at work, for evolution is both an integration as well as a differentiation. The organic body becomes more and more heterogeneous in all its structures and more and more definite in all its differentiations. Society continually dissolves and evolves. The social process is a dissolution and an evolution in which all humanity is the principle actor. In this shifting, changing panorama the process of adaptation of man to his ever changing environment is a perpetual prerequisite to the survival of the individual. For him there is no means of escape. So long as human life shall last there will be no cessation of demand upon the social organism and no failure of adaptation of the members of that organism to meet the social requirements. Each cycle places mankind one step higher in the scale of social efficiency being transformed again into a new and different being only to be retransformed by the ever changing process.

Adaptation, then, is the great law which prepares humanity to conform to the exigencies of the social mind. It is that law which presupposes and includes all the other factors which are at work in social evolution. Without it all progress is excluded from consideration and no higher plain of civilization could ever be attained. Harmony between the social body and its varying circumstances must ever be the sequel of progression which is to endure and must so continue until the end.

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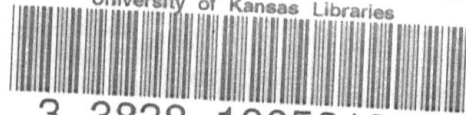
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